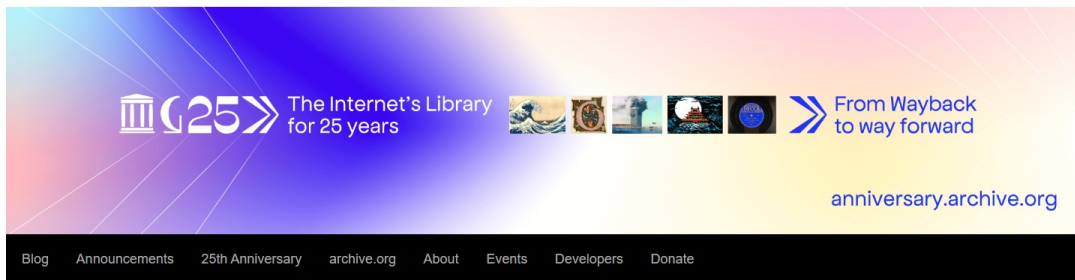


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Michelle Wu Receives Internet Archive Hero Award for Establishing the Legal Basis for Controlled Digital Lending

Posted on October 20, 2020 by Caralee Adams



Michelle Wu, Internet Archive Hero Award 2020 recipient

Michelle Wu is leading libraries to think and act in new ways to fulfill their missions.

For nearly two decades, she has advocated for preserving and expanding access to materials by responsibly digitizing collections. Using her expertise as an attorney, law librarian and professor, Wu crafted the legal theory behind [Controlled Digital Lending](#) (CDL) and has dedicated much of her career to showing libraries how to put the concept into practice.

To honor her innovative and tireless work, Wu has been named the recipient of the 2020 Internet Archive Hero Award. The annual award recognizes those who have exhibited leadership in making information available for digital learners all over the world. Past recipients have included [Phillips Academy](#), the [Biodiversity Heritage Library](#), and the [Grateful Dead](#). Michelle received the award during the Library Leaders Forum final session on October 20.

"Michelle Wu was ahead of her time in understanding the transition to the digital era and brought library lending into our new landscape," said Brewster Kahle, founder of the Internet Archive.

"Not only did Michelle see a problem coming, she did something about it," Kahle says. "It's a combination of being both a visionary on how the world could work and then making concrete steps to get us there."



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With library buildings closed now for safety, the demand for digital materials has grown. The pandemic magnifies the importance of using CDL as a strategy to expand services to the public, says Pamela Samuelson, a distinguished professor of law and information management at the University of California, Berkeley, who admires Wu's insights as a scholar and librarian.

"She set the example and made people feel comfortable with a concept that was initially a little bit questionable," says Samuelson. In her copyright classes, Samuelson now draws on Wu's work to inform her students.

"Michelle's articles explaining the concept have been very useful for students to have not just the reader's perspective, or law student's perspective, but how librarians are really taking the challenge of the digital age," Samuelson says. "They are making good things happen to carry on the grand tradition of libraries to facilitate as much access as lawfully possible to the public they serve."

Looking back on her career, Wu says she sort of fell into law. She abandoned plans for medical school after helping her roommate at the University of California San Diego study for the Law School Admission Test. Fascinated with the logic puzzles, she took the LSAT on a whim and did well enough to get a scholarship.

"I found I loved the theory of the law, looking at issues from all sorts of angles and finding a path through," says Wu, who enrolled at the California Western School of Law and worked part-time at the San Diego County Law Library. She soon realized that the adversarial nature of the legal process didn't suit how she viewed the law. Law librarianship was a better match, one grounded in collaboration and a commitment to using legal knowledge to educate and assist users in finding meaningful solutions to their legal problems. A year after earning her J.D., Wu got her master's degree in librarianship with a certificate in law librarianship at the University of Washington.

She landed her first job at George Washington University Law School Library. In 2001, she was hired by the University of Houston School of Law. It was there, following the massive destruction of the school's library due to Tropical Storm Allison, that Wu focused on the need to protect materials through digitization.

Wu says she began to wonder: "Is there a better way for libraries to prepare society for a world in which there are a growing number of natural disasters?" she recalls. "There are so many risks to our collections, and society depends on long-term access for this information," Wu says.

Wu developed the theory for a digitization program designed with copyright in mind. What came to be known as CDL, she says, strikes a balance between the interest of the users and copyright owners. A library can lend out only the number of copies that it has legitimately acquired, though the copy can be any format. The flexibility in format facilitates more effective access for a wide variety of users, including those who live remotely or have trouble physically coming to a library building, while also ensuring the preservation of content in situations like natural disasters.

After Houston, Wu worked at the Hofstra School of Law and Georgetown University Law Center. As both a library director and law professor, Wu says she has been well-positioned to advocate for CDL and reason with the skeptics.

"I haven't heard a lot of substantive objections. I have heard fear, which is common and understandable anytime you are changing the status quo, but it is something that must be overcome for advancement," says Wu. "In talking with others about CDL, I focus on what CDL is and what it is intended to accomplish, which pushes people to engage deeply instead of rejecting the idea out of fear. From my perspective, CDL is the purest form of balance in copyright that you are going to find in a world of technology, and that balance is difficult to deny when you examine CDL in detail."

Kyle K. Courtney, the copyright advisor and program manager at the Harvard Library Office for Scholarly Communication, says from the first time he met Wu, he was inspired by her ideas and willingness to challenge norms. Her research was a major influence on Courtney's work and career. Together, they co-authored a [position statement on CDL](#).

"It is great to meet your heroes sometimes — and even better to be able to work with them side by side," says Courtney. "She is not a theoretical scholar. This is what's awesome: She puts the cutting-edge CDL copyright system to work. That's why she's a trailblazer in both words and action, putting libraries at the forefront in our field."

Wu's leadership has helped advance the collaborative work of libraries and enabled there to be more transparency in sharing information, says Courtney. He and Wu have presented on CDL at several conferences and discussed the concept with Congressional staff on Capitol Hill last year.

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"She is one of the hardest working members of the library field I know," Courtney says. "She's oriented toward practical results and addresses 21st century challenges in multiple environments – public, private and academic. She is a person of remarkable integrity."

Courtney says Wu's recognition showcases what leaders in librarianship should aspire to: a successful record of progressive scholarship, influence on the next generation of librarians and a legacy of hard work that reflects an enthusiasm for libraries.

Sharing the story of CDL on Capitol Hill, Lila Bailey, policy counsel for the Internet Archive, says she was struck by Wu's ability to connect with staffers. "Michelle explains things in such a clear, intuitive, practical way," says Bailey, who also has collaborated with Wu on research. "She's so competent and conscientious."

Wu has been committed to spreading her knowledge of both academic and practical aspects of the CDL to librarians and policymakers across the country. "She is somebody who came up with a legal theory and spent her career creating a proof of concept for why this is important," Bailey says. "The Internet Archive sets this very ambitious vision of universal access to all knowledge then it tries to live up to the vision. Michelle embodies this ethos of the Internet Archive to be the change you want to see in the world."

In June, Wu retired from academia, but she continues to research and mentor emerging librarians. Too often, (outside of the sciences) academia gives more weight to the risk in innovation instead of imagining the opportunities that creative problem-solving can provide, but Wu says that attitude doesn't serve the public in the best way.

"We can't sit back and expect everyone automatically to understand the importance of libraries long term. We have to stand up for what we believe, advocate for it, and find solutions that better serve society in an ever-changing world." Wu says.

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[آهنگ جدید](#)

October 20, 2020 at 7:27 pm

im working on cdl . its hard to really understand facts of cdl



[san go](#)

October 21, 2020 at 10:09 am

so cool



[Captain Mark](#)

October 22, 2020 at 11:14 am

Congratulations

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